

A Childhood for Every Child

How Compassion-Driven Solutions Are Transforming the Nation's Well-Being



Administration for Children and Families

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Making A Real Difference

The Department of Health and Human Services addresses issues that touch the life of every American. I am proud to report to the President, to Congress, and to the American people the important work that all the HHS agencies do—the myriad of large and small ways HHS employees make a real difference, day in and day out, in the health and well-being of the people here in America and around the world.

I am especially proud of the leadership and staff of the Administration for Children and Families. ACF is the lead federal agency responsible for programs that promote the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals and communities. ACF programs help empower families to increase their economic independence and productivity. We also help build strong, healthy supportive communities that have a positive impact on the quality of life and the development of children.

Over the years, ACF has earned a reputation for forging strong partnerships with individuals, front-line providers, communities, American Indian tribes, states and Congress to improve the lives of families and children. We have achieved this by finding solutions to problems which transcend traditional political boundaries.

Moreover, ACF has developed and introduced a number of initiatives that improve the numerous needs of American families. Among the most notable is the Healthy Marriage Initiative that helps couples acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage. To be more culturally viable, we have also developed the Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative and the African-American Healthy Marriage Initiative.

Other important initiatives include the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program which benefits children who have parents who are incarcerated and have been left without a parental guide. Adopt USKids.org has also made a great deal of progress in giving many needy children caring, loving and stable homes. The Office of Refugee Resettlement continues to help refugees, Cuban/Haitian entrants and asylees to establish a new life that is free from persecution and founded on economic self reliance.

Our Office of Human Trafficking has also made headway confronting the modern-day slavery by safeguarding victims and giving them and their families the dignity to pursue the American dream.



You can learn more about these and other vital programs offered by ACF by visiting www.acf.hhs.gov. Together, the compassion we feel in our hearts is making a meaningful difference in the world.

Michael O. Leavitt
Secretary of Health and Human Services



"The measure of compassion is more than good intentions, it is good results. Sympathy is not enough. We need solutions in America, and we know where solutions are found. When schools are teaching, when families are strong, when neighbors look after their neighbors, when our people have the tools and the skills and the resources they need to improve their lives, there is no problem that cannot be solved in America." — President George W. Bush

Who We Are

Administration for Native Americans

promotes the goal of social and economic self-sufficiency of American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Native American Pacific Islanders, including Native Samoans.

Administration on Children, Youth and Families

administers the major Federal programs that support: social services that promote the positive growth and development of children and youth and their families; protective services and shelter for children and youth in at-risk situations; child care for working families and families on public assistance; and adoption for children with special needs.

Administration on Developmental Disabilities

ensures that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to culturally competent services, supports, and other assistance and opportunities that promotes independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion into the community.

Child Care Bureau supports low-income working families through child care financial assistance and promotes children's learning by improving the quality of early care and education and afterschool programs; funds research and technical assistance to support programs at the community, state, and national level

Office of Child Support Enforcement

administers the Child Support Enforcement Program, a federal/state/ local partnership to help families by promoting family self-sufficiency and child well-being.

Children's Bureau responsible for assisting States in the delivery of child welfare services - services designed to protect children and strengthen families.

Office of Community Services supports more than 3,000 neighborhood-based Community Action Agencies and Community Development Corporations that address the economic and social needs of the urban and rural poor at the local level by providing grant monies and technical assistance to these organizations.

Family and Youth Services Bureau supports local communities in providing services and opportunities to young people, particularly runaway and homeless youth.

Head Start Bureau serves the child development needs of preschool children (birth through age five) and their low-income families.

Office of Family Assistance oversees the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, which replaced what was commonly known as welfare.

Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration provides executive direction, leadership, and guidance for all ACF programs. The Office provides national leadership to develop and coordinate public and private initiatives for carrying out programs which promote permanency placement planning, family stability and self-sufficiency. The Office advises the Secretary on issues affecting America's children and families, including Native Americans, persons with developmental disabilities, refugees and legalized aliens.

Office of Legislative Affairs and Budget provides leadership in the development of legislation, budget, and policy, ensuring consistency in these areas among program and staff offices, and with the Administration for Children and Families and the Department of Health and Human Service's vision and goals.

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation responsible for developing, monitoring and evaluating programs designed to make measurable improvements in the economic and social well-being of America's children and families; collecting, compiling, and analyzing data; disseminating data analyses and reports; and providing guidance and technical assistance.

Office of Public Affairs exists to inform and educate the media and the American public through the production, marketing and dissemination of quality, reliable and consistent information on Administration programs.

Office of Refugee Resettlement provides assistance to refugees, Cuban/ Haitian entrants, asylees, and others to establish a new life that is founded on the dignity of economic self-support and encompasses full participation in opportunities which Americans enjoy.

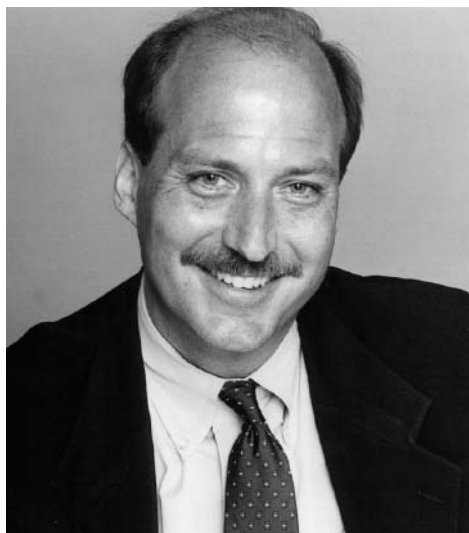
Office of Regional Operations advises the Assistant Secretary on all strategic and operational activities related to implementation of the agency's programs at the regional level.

ACF Grant Awards

Fiscal Year 2004

Alabama	\$440,854,460	1.0%
Alaska	\$185,481,506	0.4%
American Samoa	\$9,581,907	0.0%
Arizona	\$741,453,547	1.7%
Arkansas	\$307,940,692	0.7%
California	\$7,663,982,235	17.3%
Colorado	\$544,286,341	1.2%
Connecticut	\$587,209,916	1.3%
Delaware	\$102,203,799	0.2%
District of Columbia	\$269,773,266	0.6%
Fed St. of Micronesia	\$5,819,509	0.0%
Florida	\$1,795,851,897	4.1
Georgia	\$997,131,815	2.3%
Guam	\$18,389,307	0.0%
Hawaii	\$206,161,883	0.5%
Idaho	\$151,861,198	0.3%
Illinois	\$1,820,906,041	4.1%
Indiana	\$636,067,338	1.4%
Iowa	\$409,074,016	0.9%
Kansas	\$314,396,148	0.7%
Kentucky	\$559,809,576	1.3%
Louisiana	\$616,077,575	1.4%
Maine	\$196,518,561	0.4%
Maryland	\$721,634,493	1.6%
Massachusetts	\$1,015,982,585	2.3%
Michigan	\$1,823,728,589	4.1%
Minnesota	\$771,553,291	1.7%
Mississippi	\$407,176,190	0.9%
Missouri	\$696,285,143	1.6%
Montana	\$154,409,874	0.3%
Nebraska	\$227,063,482	0.5%
Nevada	\$188,434,676	0.4%
New Hampshire	\$154,048,997	0.3%
New Jersey	\$1,023,305,422	2.3%
New Mexico	\$322,340,270	0.7%
New York	\$4,627,193,957	10.5%
North Carolina	\$982,277,122	2.2%
North Dakota	\$118,147,001	0.3%
Northern Marianas	\$7,261,255	0.0%
Ohio	\$2,005,828,025	4.5%
Oklahoma	\$482,485,547	1.1%
Oregon	\$492,531,397	1.1%
Palau	\$2,179,631 0	.0%
Pennsylvania	\$2,098,375,528	4.7%
Puerto Rico	\$480,831,643	1.1%
Rhode Island	\$188,917,022	0.4%
South Carolina	\$370,171,670	0.8%
South Dakota	\$118,325,711	0.3%
Tennessee	\$652,319,893	1.5%
Texas	\$2,162,950,781	4.9%
Utah	\$272,269,659	0.6%
Vermont	\$125,545,571	0.3%
Virginia	\$713,635,948	1.6%
Virgin Islands	\$25,379,322	0.1%
Washington	\$956,835,069	2.2%
West Virginia	\$304,082,044	0.7%
Wisconsin	\$858,430,152	1.9%
Wyoming	\$73,595,655	0.2%
Total	\$44,206,365,148	100.0%

Message from the Assistant Secretary



A vision of transformational change is beginning to have a profound impact on our nation's most vulnerable families and children. Millions of families are receiving job training, peer counseling, mentoring and child care, as well as financial resources as they move from dependence on welfare to the independence of work. Record amounts of child support dollars are being collected for kids who have a parent absent from the home.

In this report, you will read about the development of this vision. You'll see how the leadership of the Secretary for Health and Human Services has supported the strategies, initiatives and programs being implemented by the department's Administration for Children and Families. That vision—to ensure that every American can enjoy the benefits of a family environment, a secure and stable community, a

nurturing childhood—is starting to make a difference in cities and small towns across the nation, through programs targeted at urban youth, disadvantaged pre-schoolers, developmentally disabled adults, impoverished refugees, and unmarried parents desperately seeking the stability of a path out of poverty. “A Childhood for Every Child”—and the activities this report outlines—describes both the approach and results of these efforts. We have aligned these against a shared recognition that poverty reduction must address not just citizens' physical needs, but their mental, emotional and psychological requirements as well.

We've designed a blueprint by which the social service delivery system has found ways to partner with those groups and organizations that can effectively address the entire scope of issues poor people face. We've begun to tear down the barriers to work by providing the kinds of supportive services that allow men and women to focus on getting and keeping jobs. Simply put, we've worked together with others to set the stage for the end of the cycle of dependency.

We discuss the enhancements and changes associated with programs and initiatives of the Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families that Americans are most familiar with—Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; the Head Start program for our youngest children; child support enforcement. We also address innovative new approaches that leverage both our existing resources and the holistic view of what's necessary to help

Americans move from dependence to self-sufficiency. The Healthy Marriage Initiative, the Compassion Capital Fund, program accessibility for both community and faith-based organizations, the introduction of new technologies to make our programs and services easier to use and more effective—all have emerged as powerful forces for positive change in the past four years.

This report also demonstrates our commitment to public accountability. Americans should demand real, measurable results, and we are delivering on that expectation. For the first time, Head Start programs nationwide are recording students' progress and being assessed on the basis of that achievement. For the first time, we are evaluating the economic impact of grants in Native American communities and city neighborhoods. For the first time, we're using the Internet to dramatically expand the search for adoptive parents, and documenting the difference an e-government initiative like AdoptUSKids.com can make. For the first time, State child care plans include early learning expectations for children and plans to support the training and professional development of early childhood caregivers.

In the end, this is a story about sustaining—and deepening—the nation's well-being. And it's one in which the staff of the Administration for Children and Families has been proud to play a role.

Wade F. Horn, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS:

A Commitment to Performance

Performance—whether introducing new technologies, managing resources to accomplish more with less, or developing appropriate ways to measure meaningful results as outcomes directly related to specific programs—has been a hallmark of the efforts undertaken by Health and Human Services and its Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to strengthen the well-being of the nation's most vulnerable children and families.

The federal government's Office of Management and Budget, as a way of determining how agencies are progressing in the way they manage their workforces or spend their appropriated dollars, color-codes the level of achievement four times a year. For the past four quarters, ACF has received the government's highest ranking—the color green—in every measured category.



In the past four years, the programs and services most closely associated with preserving the social fabric of the nation's most vulnerable populations—impoverished and homeless children, shattered families with little or no resources, developmentally disabled adults, and refugees seeking shelter and a new life—have been refocused and strengthened.

Whether it's a structured and responsive classroom for Head Start preschoolers or job training and relationship counseling for poor parents longing to move from welfare to work, new solutions have been developed and are beginning to be applied to historically intransigent challenges. The results promise to be dramatic—strengthened families, empowered communities, youths reengaged in their families and local organizations, and at-risk children measurably better off in terms of health, home life and readiness for academic achievement.

In this report, we detail those solutions—as well as the vision that frames them.

Strengthening Families

Since Congress passed welfare reform in 1996, the focus of state and tribal support programs has been to help parents find and succeed in employment, rather than remain on welfare. The reduction in welfare dependency has been dramatic, with the number of families on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) declining from 4.4 million in 1996 to less than 2 million today—their lowest level since 1970. At the same time, child poverty rates are near their historic lows and employment among low-income single mothers rose from 51% to 61%—their highest levels ever—in just four years.

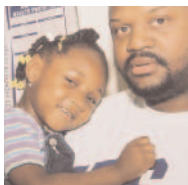
The impacts have been strong and positive but there is more to do. President George W. Bush has proposed legislation now before Congress to strengthen TANF by increasing its focus on preparing parents for full-time employment, and by enabling states to integrate services to help families transitioning out of dependency. The



President has also proposed new funding to help couples form and strengthen healthy marriages, crucial for the well-being of children and important for addressing problems of poverty and welfare dependency at their roots.

ACF's Healthy Marriage Initiative, launched in 2002, began laying the groundwork for the proposed legislation. The Initiative and services funded through the proposed new legislation helps couples, who have chosen marriage for themselves, gain greater access to marriage education services where they can acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage.

In practical terms, the Initiative would establish demonstration programs, begin integrating healthy marriage services into government social service systems, and support research and technical assistance. For example, a national Web-accessible Healthy Marriage Resource Center will offer information about what it takes to form and sustain a healthy marriage, and will provide interested organizations, couples and individuals with information about how to implement programs at the local level. An African American Healthy Marriage Initiative



and an Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative address the unique challenges of these communities.

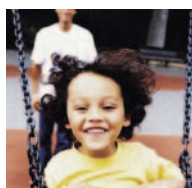
In Washington, D.C., federal employees can enroll in a healthy marriage education pilot test. At the state level, Florida has created a Commission on Marriage and Family Support Initiative, and the state's Department of Children and Families has launched three pilot projects to provide relationship skills and marriage strengthening programs to families primarily in the child welfare system.

Healthy marriages, in turn, depend upon active, engaged fathers, and we've funded new support programs. The Alabama Fatherhood Initiative, for instance, pulls together a TANF-funded statewide network of agencies and organizations to provide programs and services to help non-custodial parents to financially support their children and to have greater and more constructive

involvement in their kids' lives. Over 30 community-based programs offer training at select two-year colleges.

In addition to healthy marriage services, we are achieving results helping low-income families through other means as well. The Welfare Peer Technical Advisory Network ensures that states can easily ask for funds and share best practices. Families in Jacksonville, Florida, Waco, Texas and Benton Harbor, Michigan learn how to utilize earned income tax credits that often go unclaimed. And families with developmentally-disabled adults or children benefit from Family Support 360—a national initiative in 31 cities and towns that's developing a model for centralized, convenient service delivery.

These programs prove the American dream can belong to everyone.



SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS: African-American Healthy Marriage Initiative

Tallahassee, Florida's North Florida African-American Healthy Marriage Initiative coalition—67 nonprofits, churches, schools and community members—is just a year into its existence. But the goal has been apparent for a long time.

"Two-parent households experience reduced stress, and in most cases this reduces the incidents of abuse and neglect in the home," commented coalition member Paula DeBoles-Johnson, executive director of Tallahassee's Capital City Youth Development Corporation, to a local reporter in July.

Statistics reveal the scope of the challenge: 41 percent of African-American adults are married, compared with 62 percent of whites; 69 percent of African-American births are to unmarried women, compared with 25 percent for whites; and 55 percent of African-American children live with single parents, compared with 23 percent of white children.

The Tallahassee initiative is the direct result of a landmark 2003 meeting in Washington, DC. From that gathering, the African-American Healthy Marriage Initiative (AAHMI) was born.

Today, there are AAHMI sites across the country. An Oakland, California coalition of churches has developed a community strategy for healthy marriages, wealth-building and counseling for imprisoned fathers. A Los Angeles group will host a Hip Hop-themed conference for young adults.

"We can combine the work of faith-based, governmental and private organizations to hold people's attention and get them to listen," noted DeBoles-Johnson in the Tallahassee Democrat. "There's no way we can combat this unless we're working together."



Empowering Communities

6

A STUDY IN EMPOWERMENT:

From Baghdad to Brick Ovens



When Haythem and Saad Alyadako came to the United States less than four years ago from Iraq, they could not have imagined that a grant awarded to the International Rescue Committee in San Diego, California would fund the impetus for their new lives.

In August 2003, with the assistance of the Committee's Microenterprise Program, the brothers became the official owners of Peppoli's Pizza. They used money from an Individual Development Account Matched Savings Program, combined with personal savings, to buy the business. Under their management, Peppoli's sales soared. By December, the brothers—and their restaurant—were featured on local television, one of 60 new businesses for which the federally-funded International Rescue Committee could take credit.

A priority for the Administration for Children and Families since 2001, communities nationwide now access the resources necessary to deliver services to the nation's most vulnerable with greater ease, efficiency and support. This access helps sustain economic development of America's cities, towns and tribal reservations, ensuring that families grow in a nurturing environment. To that end, we directed grants to more than 3500 community- and faith-based organizations to improve their effectiveness, enhance their ability to provide social services, diversify their funding sources and emulate model social service programs. People most in need of support received training in grant-writing, program planning and performance evaluation, leveling that playing field. In 2003, 30 percent of the Native American organizations earning federal support for childcare or Head Start, for job training or mentoring, for youth counseling or skills development, received that funding for the first time. In Southeast Alaska, native language immersion retreats teach boys and girls the Tlingit language. Texas teens learn the benefits of abstinence until marriage. And the homeless in cities and rural communities from Honolulu to Homestead, Florida eat better meals and sleep in more secure shelters.

President George W. Bush's Faith-Based and Community Initiative maps out this direction, offering a fresh start in helping those in need. Recognizing that government too often ignored or impeded the efforts of faith-based and community organizations, the Faith-Based and Community Initiative Center within the Department of Health and Human Services—following the lead of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives—helps grassroots leaders to compete on an equal footing for federal dollars, to receive greater private support and to remove bureaucratic barriers. ACF has reached out to congregations, many of them with a long history providing child care, to help them serve low-income children and access child care subsidies.

This empowerment effort began with an assessment to better understand the needs of America's communities. The findings led to targeted training, Web-based assistance and an approach that breaks



the cycle of entitlement for the most affluent organizations, typically able to allocate substantial resources to their requests.

The National Congress of American Indians, for instance, brought together tribal leaders from across the country for a Tribal Consultation in Phoenix, Arizona last December as a prelude to the first National Native American Conference. Economic development projects already in place—like the Winnebago Tribe's Ho-Chunk Healthy Village, a 40-acre site designed to promote a healthy environment by blending three unique development concepts: culture, new urbanism and active living model an approach to development that meets both social and economic goals.

Progress also comes from partnerships. Intermediary organizations help grassroots faith-based and community organizations increase their capacity to assist people in need. The Faith-Based and Community Initiative supports intermediaries by improving their effectiveness, enhancing their ability to provide social services, diversifying

their funding sources, and encouraging social service best practices. The Greater Grand Rapids Initiative, the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative and Families Northwest are but three examples of coalitions that are proving greater than the sum of their members.

Countrywide initiatives—the Urban Partnership to develop best-practice organizational models, a rural initiative to extend programs like Head Start into impoverished, underdeveloped towns, and the New Freedom Initiative to ensure that communities welcome the developmentally disabled—leverage the work being done by coalitions. But community empowerment—and the economic well-being that accompanies it—extends to the development of individuals as well.

Helping the nation's poor move toward greater self-sufficiency by accumulating savings and purchasing long-term assets expanded dramatically in the past four years. Helping people purchase an asset, as opposed to simply increasing their income, provides stability that may allow them to escape the

cycle of poverty permanently. Examples of long-term assets include a home, higher education and training, and a business. The tools vary from locale to locale. In Milwaukee, for example, the Asset Building Coalition, a partnership of 13 local financial institutions and other organizations, promotes individual development accounts. This citywide initiative offers intensive financial literacy training through the city's "Get Checking" program and helps eligible participants create and grow matched savings accounts, known as IDAs.

Resettled refugees—those newest Americans who've fled homelands for the safety and security of our shores—have achieved remarkable success through asset building programs. Over the past five years, 15,774 new citizens saved over \$20 million, and generated \$165 million in local economic activity with the assistance of the program. A sister program, Micro-enterprise Development, launched more than 2500 new businesses and created thousands of new jobs.

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS:

The Compassion Capital Fund

In 2004, President Bush announced \$43 million in 145 grants to organizations that provide services and support through soup kitchens, homeless shelters, drug treatment centers, job training programs, and other compassionate programs. Faith-based and community-based organizations will receive the federal funding from the Compassion Capital Fund, which is in its third year of existence. "The Compassion Capital Fund provides local and faith-based groups with important resources to help those most in need," Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson said at the grants announcement. "By further empowering organizations to perform works of mercy in their neighborhoods, we are continuing our goal of putting compassion in action."

The Fund, created in 2001, focuses on two principal objectives: to increase the capabilities of grassroots organizations, and to establish and disseminate best practices that can be used as models for what the President terms the "armies of compas-

sion" for their efforts to improve the lives of families and children.

First-year grants in 2004 went to 14 new intermediary organizations, including the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty in New York; Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma; the Governor's Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in Ohio; and Mission West Virginia, Inc. Follow-up awards to support demonstration programs went to 31 other groups to help them increase their effectiveness, enhance their ability to provide social services and to create collaborations to better serve those in need. Community Technology Centers' Network, for example, is helping 150 community- and faith-based organizations in Illinois, Massachusetts and California enhance their technology capabilities through training, technical assistance, regional workshops and online resources.

Other grants were given to 100 organizations that work on priority issues such as at-risk youth,



homelessness, healthy marriages and serving people in rural communities. Project Regina, sponsored by the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, is one example. Founded in 1976, Project Regina began as a way for low-income women to learn basic sewing skills. Over time the program has become a well-focused commercial sewing training program which includes work readiness skills and basic workplace language skills for its target population—immigrant men and women.



For decades, society perceived America's youth as a series of problems to be solved. Drug abuse, smoking, dropping out of school—each mandated a separate government activity or program of prevention. In 2001, that perception changed. The leadership in the Department of Health and Human Services directed a new approach—one that would align a range of services against a single unifying vision: positive youth development. “Positive youth development,” announced Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary Wade Horn at the 2003 National Youth Summit in Washington, D.C., “sees youth more holistically, and understands that the best way to help youth avoid high risk behaviors is by building on their assets and helping them develop feelings of competence, belonging and empowerment.”

The National Youth Summit—now in its third year—serves as a model for youth empowerment. A nationwide council of teenagers helps planners select its speakers, draft the event's agenda and structure its workshops. Hundreds of youth from every state gathered in Cleveland and the nation's capital to engage each other in discussions on community involvement, engagement and service.

Over the past three years, the Administration for Children and Families incorporated more positive programming for youth into its existing programs. Every youth-serving grant application administered by Health and Human Services must introduce strategies like safe after-school environments and activities, ongoing relationships with adult role models, and opportunities for community service and civic participation. Head Start introduced programming for older siblings of Head Start children, and opened the door for those youth to be mentors and coaches to three- and four-year olds in the program. Even the grant review process changed. In 2003, young men and women had a significant say in awarding 105 million federal dollars. The Child Care Bureau is funding a multi-year, national technical assistance project to help States and communities improve the quality of afterschool programs—which are key settings for promoting positive youth development during out-of-school hours. ACF is the largest Federal funder of out-of-school time services for children and youth.

Positive Youth Development



Voices from the National Youth Summit

"We believe in the worth and dignity of every teen—every teen, not a few, not just some, not just the privileged—but every one, regardless of age, race, gender, economic status, or disability." —Wade Horn

"We were there not only to meet new people, but most importantly to build strength and pyramids of information such as youth engagement, youth sports, youth development, engaging youth to the community, youth tough topics, and to learn the secret of success. Then take all these great introductions and transfer them to your community, family and school. I feel very proud of myself because I have learned that there is no obstacle that could stop me from reaching my goal or my dreams."

—Jesimiel Riviera, Crawford High School, San Diego, California



The most vulnerable need the greatest support, and the network that supports local communities in providing services and opportunities to young people, particularly runaway and homeless youth, grew stronger. The Chicago-based National Runaway Switchboard, with its toll-free hotline, gives runaways a safe channel to receive counsel, support and referral to other services. The National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, a Web-based resource for communities, organizations and individuals, publishes new and effective strategies for supporting young people and their families. Conferences share research and best practices identified through university-directed studies. Database technologies track and monitor runaways' status and homeless youths' progress.

States are picking up this banner, using the shared vision to restructure programs and redirect resources. The Massachusetts Youth Development State Collaboration Project, for example, working with young people in foster care, has promoted the creation of two key new college financial aid programs targeted to youth currently or previously in foster care. The State Board of Higher Education voted to provide state college tuition waivers for all youth age 24 and under who were adopted through the State Department of Social Services and all

foster youth, age 24 and under, who came into the system under a Care and Protection petition and "aged out" of the system without being adopted or legally returned home.

Additionally, in New York, the Office of Children and Family Services has created an Office of Youth Development, continued the Integrated County Planning process in 15 counties and New York City, held training events for participating counties, and arranged with Cornell University to provide youth development training to the State's youth bureaus.

They—and other states' agencies—share lessons learned—focusing on measurable goals, managing for performance, collaboration, and building a foundation for long-term change.

For youths transitioning from homelessness, housing and training are made available through Independent Living Training Vouchers. In Birmingham, Alabama, the Children's Aid Society developed a transitional living program known as Project Independence. For eight homeless youth parents and their children, Project Independence offers an opportunity to live with a mentor family that lend support and assistance while the youth learn independent skills and parenting. For young, inexperienced parents and their innocent, vulnerable offspring, it's a chance for a future.



SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS:

Mentoring for Children of Prisoners

Between 1991 and 2001, the number of children with a parent in a federal or state correctional facility increased more than 100 percent, from about 900,000 to more than 2 million. The risk those children and youths face is profound: studies show they have a seven times greater chance than peers without imprisoned parents to become incarcerated themselves.

Mentoring—recognized as a powerful youth development strategy—was launched as an initiative by President George W. Bush and embraced by the Departments of Justice, Education, Labor and Health and Human Services. In 2003, \$9 million became available to programs focused on children of prisoners; success—and demand—has grown the figure to nearly \$50 million.

In cities like Philadelphia and Washington, in tribal communities and small towns like La Plata, Maryland, children and their families are being given the chance to exercise leadership, build skills, and become involved in their communities. Fifty-two organizations received grants in the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program's first year. Some 6,000 children with an incarcerated parent eventually will be matched with mentors.

"Mentors offer love, guidance and encouragement to the children they connect with," Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson has said. "This program will give children whose parents are incarcerated the support they need as they face the day-to-day challenges of growing up."



Children's Well-Being

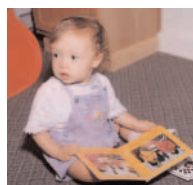
At the core of the programs and services to strengthen the nation's families, to give communities the resources needed to nurture those families, and to provide support for youth in need of direction is the well-being of the children who are siblings, residents and family members.

This vision steered our efforts over the past four years in several areas. We enhanced early childhood learning, and hold teachers and administrators accountable for its quality. We developed programs to use child support to bring families together rather than drive them apart. We directed funding to programs and services that make real and measurable differences in lives and we identified and promoted best practices in child care. In every case, we planned for results that show those who need these services the most benefited from better focus, effectiveness and accessibility.



The early childhood initiative announced by President Bush in 2002—*Good Start, Grow Smart*—stands at the forefront of efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education, which in the past left too many children arriving at school unprepared to learn. Because a significant number of young children receive care from people other than their parents (62 percent of children age 5 or younger), Federal and state governments provide more than \$18 billion annually (more than \$14 billion in Federal support alone) to help families—particularly low-income families—provide for child care. In the *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative, President Bush called on the States to establish early learning guidelines—expectations for what children should know and be able to do when they enter kindergarten—with State child care plans as a catalyst for the participation of early care and education providers across programs. As a result, all 50 States are now actively working on early learning guidelines, with a special focus on pre-reading and pre-math skills. ACF staff and technical assistance providers have delivered training throughout the country and many on-site consultations for States.”

The response has been tremendous. More than half of the States are already implementing their guidelines by reaching out to parents



SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS:

AdoptUSKids Website

Ron and Debbie Miller, living in a small town in North Carolina in 2003, had adopted a brother and sister over 20 years earlier. With their 11-year-old son Dylan, they decided to do it again.

In 2002, the Millers saw a segment on TV featuring waiting children and jotted down the 800 number for Children's Home Society. They called that number and began the process to be approved as an adoptive family resource.

At the suggestion of their caseworker, Gayle Fisher, the Millers began logging on to AdoptUSKids.org and, with their son Dylan, would look at the photos and read the descriptions of waiting children. President George W. Bush and the Department of Health and Human Services had launched www.AdoptUSKids.org that same year. AdoptUSKids, an Internet-based adoption photolisting service, was an immediate success; in a little over a year, more than 2,000 children pictured on the site had found homes.

The Millers would look at the site's photos and read the descriptions of waiting children. One evening, as they looked at pictures of two brothers, Dylan exclaimed, "That's Matt! He's in my class at school!"

The brothers—11 year-old Matt and 15 year-old Johnathan—had wondered if adoption would ever happen. Their caseworker, Kim Burrows, had registered them on AdoptUSKids.org in hopes that the family the boys needed would see them and come forward.

The Millers contacted Gayle Fisher at Children's Home Society who then called Kim Burrows at D.S.S. Visits between the boys and the Millers began in early March of 2003. "We let the relationship evolve," said Debbie Miller "and it still is."

Barb Holtan, Project Director of AdoptUSKids, points out that although AdoptUSKids.org helped in finding the Millers for Johnathan and Matt, the web



site is only one part in a large effort. "AdoptUSKids is a tool which, when used by good people such as these, can certainly help in finding permanency for waiting children. At AdoptUSKids, we see believers like this every day. As a result, kids are finding permanent families in record numbers around the country."

and caregivers with materials and training to help them prepare their children for school. All 50 states have created partnerships across key early care and education programs and ties between child care and local school systems have never been stronger."

Despite these significant resources, not all children receive high-quality care because: 1) many states do not fully align what children are doing before they enter school with what is expected of them once they are in school; 2) early childhood programs are seldom evaluated based on how well they prepare students to succeed in school; and 3) not enough information exists for early childhood teachers, parents, and other child care providers on the activities that prepare children to be successful in school.

Head Start—an eight-week summer program begun nearly 40 years ago and now educating approximately 900,000 children five and under—has been strengthened to respond to these concerns. Fifty thousand teachers have been trained in new techniques to teach literacy. Improved regional on-site monitoring of enrollments opens up more than 10,000 additional seats in classrooms. Expanded technical assistance is more accessible, both on the Internet, and through locally-based experts. Fathers are being encouraged to get more involved, and innovation-focused grants spur programs to think more creatively about how they deliver their services.

Because no child should be disadvan-

tagged because of the circumstances of his or her birth, a new National Reporting System documents what children are learning, and assesses opportunities for improvement so every child benefits from their Head Start experience. A ten-member Advisory Committee on Head Start Accountability and Educational Performance Standards will take a look at those findings in 2005, and consider if the system can be made even better.

Improvements to children's educational well-being mirror enhancements to their economic well-being. We have expanded our efforts in child support and its enforcement to include increasing access and visitation, and work closely with NCPs to increase collections. Sophisticated use of the enforcement data we collect allows courts to distinguish between parents who have the means to pay and are avoiding their responsibilities, and those who just want to be part of their kids' lives and would pay if they could. Today, 90 percent—the most ever—of all collected funds goes directly to the children and families deprived of this court-ordered support.

These improvements derive from measures such as increased automation, expansion of the Federal Parent Locator Service to include the National Directory of New Hires and Federal Case Registry, the passport denial program, the financial institution data match, and license revocation. And their success drives family self-sufficiency nationwide. For low-income families who receive child support, those dollars pay for 26 percent of

the family budget. Important too, fathers can establish paternity more easily, encouraging them to provide financial and emotional support. This impact also has been dramatic. The annual number of paternities established or acknowledged has reached almost 1.6 million. By 2003, with a caseload of 16 million, states collected \$21 billion for families and their children.

Other efforts to improve child well-being include better access to child care, assistance in paying for heat and power, incentives for states to improve foster care, broader access to adoption services, and a national Campaign to Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking, supporting both children and adults.

What binds these together is the desire to improve the lives of the people and families protected by America's social safety net. Helping people change their lives for the better, helping them realize their dreams, reduces their vulnerability and develops their self-sufficiency.

This is how a nation's well-being flourishes.



Looking to the Future

For the past four years, the Administration for Children and Families has been working closely with regional, state, county and tribal agencies, with community- and faith-based organizations, and with engaged, committed citizens across the country to build the foundation for a better future for our nation's most vulnerable families and children.

Our effort—to improve the way services are delivered, to expand access to those services, and better train and prepare both clients and professional staff—has been a good start. But there is so much more to accomplish.

In the years ahead, the programs and initiatives described in these pages will expand and strengthen, giving tools and techniques that work to many stakeholders, from case managers to college and university partners, from state and city officials, to parents and their children striving to build better lives.

Our goals are ambitious. As a result of our efforts, we hope that these resources will be just as accessible in small, rural towns as they are in city neighborhoods today. We hope that the literacy skills of our youngest children will increase and that they'll be better prepared for the discipline of the classroom. We hope that Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program will be reauthorized and that Congress will

expand the vision of the original legislation, identifying and closing the gaps that have kept welfare reform from realizing its full potential.

In that near future, the nation's most at-risk youth will have more opportunities to be mentored by caring adult role models, and will become re-engaged in their communities. Local faith- and community-based organizations will have seized the opportunity to join community peers in bringing support services to their neediest neighbors. Training and education will be available to fathers and mothers trying to strengthen and sustain relationships made fragile by joblessness, substance abuse and youthful inexperience.

In this vision of the future, the services and programs described herein will continue to be delivered in an integrated, holistic way—focused on the needs of communities and citizens, using new technologies to extend access, and ensuring that efforts to deliver meaningful and valuable results will grow and prosper.

For the past four years, the Administration for Children and Families has had a single focus: to sustain and deepen the nation's well-being. We have made great strides, and we will continue these responsibilities on behalf of every family and child in America.





Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services